DOOM 2099

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THE 1990'S
THE MILLENIUM APPROACHES, AND HUMANITY STANDS AT YET ANOTHER CROSSROADS.
RICH WITH FANTASTIC POTENTIAL, THIS ERA MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE PROLOGUE TO A GOLDEN AGE.
INSTEAD, COMPARED WITH THE TIMES TO COME, IT IS ONLY THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM.
NEW YORK TIMES
THE NEW CENTURY WILL BE DRENCHED IN BLOOD AND PAIN.
HEROES WILL DIE. INNOCENTS WILL SUFFER. THE EARTH WILL BE RAVAGED.
ALL SO A HANDFUL OF CORPORATIONS MAY PROFIT.
NOT UNTIL A CENTURY LATER WILL I HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SALVAGE AND PROTECT WHAT REMAINS.
THAT IS WHY I RISKED RETURNING HERE --
-- TO MY PAST.
YOU! KNOW WHO I AM. YOU! SIMPLY REFUSE TO BELIEVE THE TRUTH.
YOU LIE, IMPOSTOR --

STAN LEE presents
RACE AGAINST TIME PART
CONCLUSION!
HOMECOMING
THERE IS ONLY ONE VICTOR VON DOOM!
Ah, RECKLESS YOUTH. I KNOW THIS DOOM ALL TOO WELL. RAGE STILL CLOUDS HIS LOGIC.
HIS VOLATILE EMOTIONS UNDERMINE HIS GENIUS.
STILL, I SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED THAT HE WOULD ALLY HIMSELF WITH NAMOR TO COME AFTER ME.*
AFTER ALL, THAT IS WHAT I WOULD HAVE DONE.
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* SEE FANTASTIC FOUR 42 -- Suzanne

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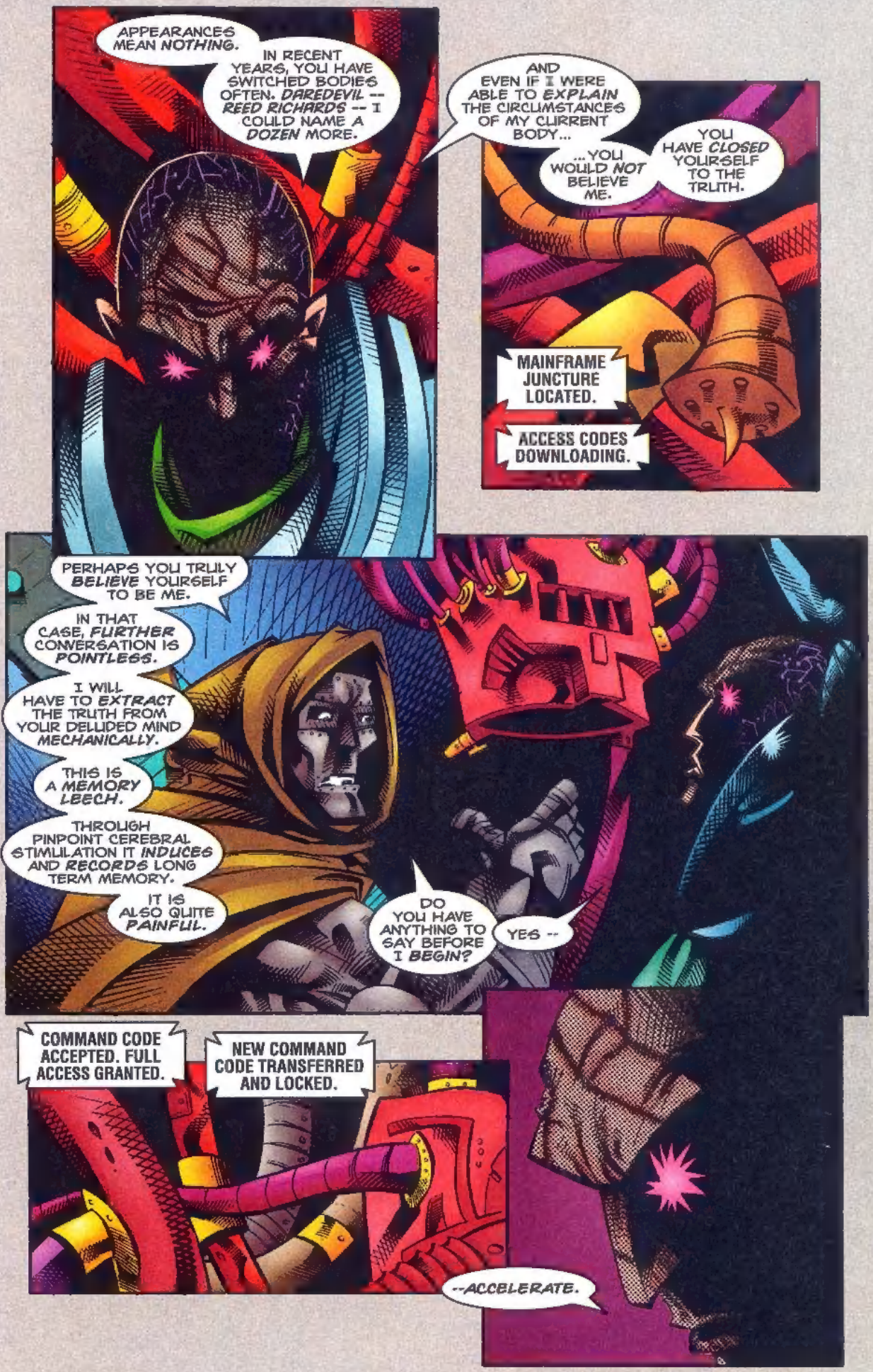
I HAVE TOLD YOU THIS ALREADY! I AM YOUR FUTURE SELF.
YOUR PRESENT IS MY PAST.
I HAVE TRAVELED BACK IN TIME TO PREVENT A CATASTROPHE OF UNIMAGINABLE MAGNITUDE.
AND NOW, YOUR INTERFERENCE IS COSTING FUTURE LIVES.
ONLY A FOOL WOULD BELIEVE SUCH TRANSPARENT LIES.
YOU'RE NO STRANGER TO TIME TRAVEL, DOOM.
ISN'T IT POSSIBLE THAT ONE DAY YOU WOULD CONFRONT A PAST OR FUTURE VERSION OF YOURSELF?
I HAVE SCRUPULOUSLY AVOIDED SUCH AN ENCOUNTER, NAMOR.
THE PARADOXICAL NATURE OF SUCH AN EVENT COULD HAVE GRAVE CONSEQUENCES --
-- EVEN TO THE POINT OF UNRAVELING THE FRAGILE FABRIC OF TIME ITSELF.
I HAD TO TAKE THAT CHANCE IF I WAS TO SAVE MY COUNTRY -- OUR COUNTRY.
I HAD CONQUERED THE UNITED STATES --
-- OUSTING THE MEGA-CORPORATE PARASITES THAT WERE BLEEDING ITS RESOURCES DRY.
IN RETALIATION, THEY FILLED THE SKIES OF LATVERIA WITH WAVE SPIDERS --
-- CYBORG DEATH MACHINES THAT COVERED CITIES WITH VIRULENT NECROTOXINS --
-- WIPING OUT MOST OF THE LATVERIAN POPULATION.

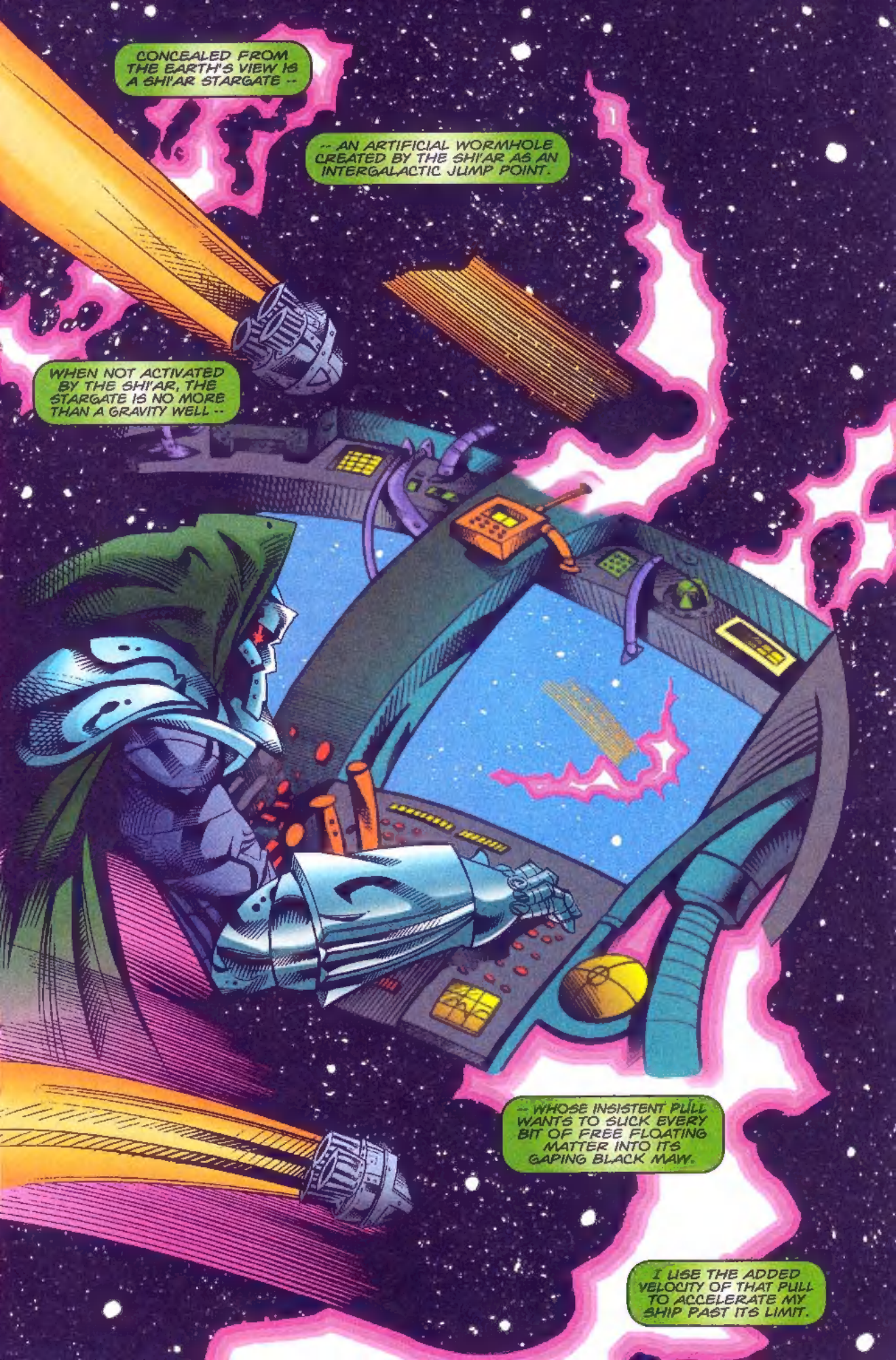
AND THAT'S WHY YOU INTEND TO TURN LATVERIA INTO A NATION ADDICTED TO THE VENOM OF SOME OBSCURE CRUSTACEAN SUB-SPECIES --
-- BECAUSE IT WILL SOMEHOW MAKE FUTURE GENERATIONS OF LATVERIA IMMUNE TO THESE SO-CALLED NECROTOXINS?
MY RESEARCH PROVED THAT THE VENOM STRENGTHENS THE SAME PROTEIN BOND THE NECROTOXINS DESTROY.
BY THE LOOK IN YOUR EYES, I THINK YOU'VE CONSUMED TOO MUCH OF THAT "CRAB-DOPE."
YOU'RE DELUSIONAL.
MY OWN EXPOSURE WAS ACCIDENTAL* --
-- BUT I ASSURE YOU, I AM IN COMPLETE CONTROL OF MY FACULTIES.
I'LL SAY THIS FOR HIM, DOCTOR, HE HAS YOUR ARROGANCE.
I WONDER WHO LIES BENEATH THAT MASK.
INDEED. IT IS TIME WE SEE THE FACE OF THIS PRESUMPTUOUS STORYTELLER.
* SEE DOOM 2099 #42. -- Suzanne.
I LET MY YOUNGER SELF UNMASK ME, KNOWING THAT IN HIS ZEAL --
-- HE WILL MISS THE TINY CYBER-FILAMENT THAT SNAKES OUT OF MY ARMOR TOWARDS THE MACHINERY BEHIND ME.
HAH! THERE IS YOUR PROOF! THIS IS NOT MY FACE!
YOU CONCEAL YOUR FACE OBSESSIVELY, DOOM, SO I WILL HAVE TO TAKE YOUR WORD.


APPEARANCES MEAN NOTHING.
IN RECENT YEARS, YOU HAVE SWITCHED BODIES OFTEN. DAREDEVIL -- REED RICHARDS -- I COULD NAME A DOZEN MORE.
AND EVEN IF I WERE ABLE TO EXPLAIN THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF MY CURRENT BODY...
...YOU WOULD NOT BELIEVE ME.
YOU HAVE CLOSED YOURSELF TO THE TRUTH.
MAINFRAME JUNCTURE LOCATED.
ACCESS CODES DOWNLOADING.
PERHAPS YOU TRULY BELIEVE YOURSELF TO BE ME.
IN THAT CASE, FURTHER CONVERSATION IS POINTLESS.
I WILL HAVE TO EXTRACT THE TRUTH FROM YOUR DELUDED MIND MECHANICALLY.
THIS IS A MEMORY LEECH.
THROUGH PINPOINT CEREBRAL STIMULATION IT INDUCES AND RECORDS LONG TERM MEMORY.
IT IS ALSO QUITE PAINFUL.
DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY BEFORE I BEGIN?
YES --
COMMAND CODE ACCEPTED. FULL ACCESS GRANTED.
NEW COMMAND CODE TRANSFERRED AND LOCKED.
--ACCELERATE.

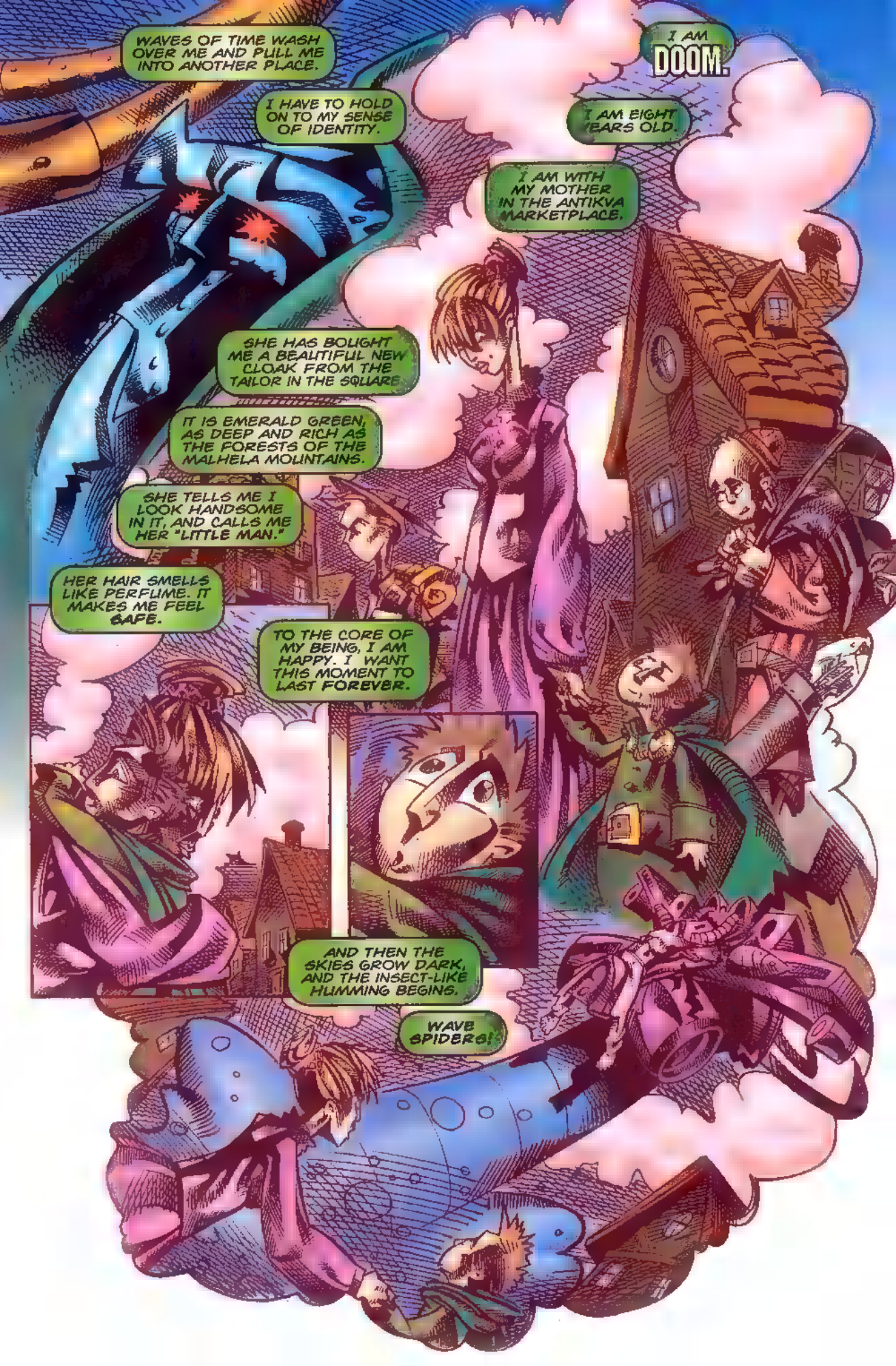
AT MY COMMAND, THE SHIP ABRUPTLY CHANGES COURSE --
-- LEAVING EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE WITH SUPERSONIC SPEED.
THE SUDDEN INCREASE IN G-FORCE IMMOBILIZES MY TWO CAPTORS --
-- LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO FREE MYSELF OF MY RESTRAINTS.
COMPUTER, RESUME COURSE.
VOICE COMMAND NOT RECOGNIZED.
DOOM -- WHAT IS HAPPENING --?!
I CONTROL THIS SHIP.
I DON'T CARE WHO YOU ARE.
YOUR ACTIONS ENDANGERED MY AQUATIC KINGDOM --
-- AND FOR THAT YOU WILL PAY.
COMPUTER, DECREASE OXYGEN TO ZERO.
IMPOSSIBLE. NO ONE COULD BREAK MY ENCRYPTION CODE.
EXCEPT THE MAN WHO WROTE THEM.
HOW MUCH LONGER WILL YOU DENY THE TRUTH? I AM YOU...
GASP!
THE MICROSCOPIC NANOTECH 'BOTS COURSING THROUGH MY BLOODSTREAM BECOME OXYGEN FACTORIES --
-- COMPENSATING FOR THE SUDDEN LACK OF BREATHABLE AIR --
-- AND GIVING ME TIME TO REPLACE MY FACEPLATE.

AS I LOOK DOWN INTO THE ARMORED VISAGE OF MY YOUNGER SELF --
-- I REALIZE THAT THE MASK IS MY TRUE FACE.
I WILL KILL YOU FOR THIS AFFRONT.
NO -- THAT WOULD BE SUICIDAL. CALM YOURSELF. I INTEND YOU NO HARM.
I REALIZE NOW THAT BY STAYING ANY LONGER IN THIS TIME --
-- I MAY CREATE GREATER PROBLEMS THAN THE ONE I AM ATTEMPTING TO SOLVE.
IT IS TIME I RETURNED TO THE NEXT CENTURY.
AND WHAT ABOUT US?
YOU AND NAMOR ARE FREE TO RETURN TO EARTH.
COMPUTER, RESTORE OXYGEN LEVELS TO NORMAL.
THERE'S NO TIME PLATFORM ON THIS SHIP.
I CAN USE THE SHI'AR STARGATE TO SLINGSHOT ME INTO THE FUTURE. RISKY, BUT POSSIBLE.
HOWEVER, I DOUBT YOU ARE THAT SKILLED A PILOT.
YOU ARE.
ONE THING PUZZLES ME.

IF YOU ARE THE VICTOR VON DOOM OF *TOMORROW*...
...WHY DIDN'T YOU *REMEMBER* THIS ENCOUNTER FROM YOUR YOUTH?
A *VALID* QUESTION, AND ONE I CANNOT FULLY ANSWER.
I HAVE SUSTAINED GREAT INJURY EXPLORING THE BOUNDARIES OF SPACE AND TIME.
PORTIONS OF MY *MEMORY* HAVE ALSO BEEN CASUALTIES OF THAT EXPLORATION.
ANOTHER *FACILE FABRICATION*.
THIS FUTURE OF WHICH YOU SPEAK WILL *NOT* BE MINE.
THEN *CHANGE* IT, AND PROVE ME *WRONG*.
BUT KNOW THIS, FOR EVERY *VICTORY* YOU SAVOR, THERE WILL BE A *LOSS* THAT *SCARS* YOU.
I'VE NO WISH TO BE *YOUNG* AGAIN.


CONCEALED FROM THE EARTH'S VIEW IS A SHI'AR STARGATE --
-- AN ARTIFICIAL WORMHOLE CREATED BY THE SHI'AR AS AN INTERGALACTIC JUMP POINT.
WHEN NOT ACTIVATED BY THE SHI'AR, THE STARGATE IS NO MORE THAN A GRAVITY WELL --
-- WHOSE INSISTENT PULL WANTS TO SUCK EVERY BIT OF FREE FLOATING MATTER INTO ITS GAPING BLACK MAW.
I USE THE ADDED VELOCITY OF THAT PULL TO ACCELERATE MY SHIP PAST ITS LIMIT.

THE CRAB VENOM IN MY SYSTEM BEGINS TO AFFECT MY PERCEPTION.
CAN'T LET MYSELF LOSE CONCENTRATION. I MUST FOCUS.
I HAVE TO PULL OUT OF MY DESCENT AT THE PRECISE MOMENT --
-- OR THE SHIP WILL BE CRUSHED BY THE ENORMOUS PRESSURE INSIDE THE WELL.
CENTRIFUGAL FORCE WINDS THE SHIP AROUND THE WELL'S NEXUS --
-- AND THEN THROWS THE CRAFT AWAY FROM THE WELL AT FASTER THAN LIGHT SPEED.
I'M HAVING DIFFICULTY CONCENTRATING.
I CAN'T TELL IF THE SUDDEN LIQUIDITY OF MY SURROUNDINGS IS CAUSED BY THE DRUG --
-- OR BECAUSE I'VE SUCCEEDED IN BREAKING THE TIME BARRIER.


WAVES OF TIME WASH OVER ME AND PULL ME INTO ANOTHER PLACE.
I HAVE TO HOLD ON TO MY SENSE OF IDENTITY.
I AM DOOM.
I AM EIGHT YEARS OLD.
I AM WITH MY MOTHER IN THE ANTIKVA MARKETPLACE.
SHE HAS BOUGHT ME A BEAUTIFUL NEW CLOAK FROM THE TAILOR IN THE SQUARE.
IT IS EMERALD GREEN, AS DEEP AND RICH AS THE FORESTS OF THE MALHELA MOUNTAINS.
SHE TELLS ME I LOOK HANDSOME IN IT, AND CALLS ME HER "LITTLE MAN."
HER HAIR SMELLS LIKE PERFUME. IT MAKES ME FEEL SAFE.
TO THE CORE OF MY BEING, I AM HAPPY. I WANT THIS MOMENT TO LAST FOREVER.
AND THEN THE SKIES GROW DARK, AND THE INSECT-LIKE HUMMING BEGINS.
WAVE SPIDERS!

I SCREAM FOR MY MOTHER TO RUN --
-- BUT IT IS TOO LATE...
I WATCH MY MOTHER MELT ONTO THE COBBLESTONE PATHWAY LIKE CANDLE WAX.
LIKE ALL OF LATVERIA WILL ONE DAY.
ALL I CAN DO IS SCREAM.
NOOOO!
A SUDDEN JOLT BRINGS ME TO MY SENSES.
THE SHIP IS DECELERATING.

MY HALLUCINATION HAS ENDED, BUT THE IMAGES STAY WITH ME.
I NO LONGER FEEL THE INSISTENT NEED FOR CRAB VENOM --
-- AND I WONDER IF THE TIME TRAVEL HAS FLUSHED IT OUT OF MY SYSTEM.
THE ONBOARD COMPUTER CONFIRMS I'VE RETURNED APPROXIMATELY A MONTH AFTER I LEFT --
-- TWO MONTHS AFTER HEROD'S ASSAULT ON LATVERIA.
IT IS AS CLOSE AS I COULD HAVE HOPED, GIVEN THE IMPROVISED MANNER OF TIME TRAVEL.
AS I DESCEND TOWARDS EARTH, I AM SURPRISED TO SEE NOT ONLY THE MOON --
-- BUT ANOTHER -- MORE OMINOUS -- BODY CIRCLING THE EARTH.

HOW CAN THIS BE?
THE PLANETOID I IDENTIFIED APPROACHING OUR SOLAR SYSTEM COULDN'T HAVE TRAVELLED THIS QUICKLY TO ITS CURRENT POSITION.
IT SHOULD NOT BE IN ORBIT AROUND EARTH.
MORE IMMEDIATELY, THE EFFECT OF SUCH A LARGE MASS IN PROXIMITY TO THE EARTH WOULD BE DISASTROUS.
IF ONE MOON AFFECTS EARTHLY CYCLES SO PROFOUNDLY...
...IMAGINE THE CHAOS CAUSED BY THE INTRODUCTION OF A SECOND.
MY FEARS ARE CONFIRMED WHEN I SEE THAT ATYPICAL STORM CLOUDS WRAP AROUND THE EARTH...
HEAVY RAIN BATTERS THE HULL OF MY SHIP AS I ENTER THE ATMOSPHERE --
-- BREAKING THROUGH ABOVE THE MALHELA MOUNTAINS.
I HAVE MUCH TO DO NOW THAT I AM FINALLY...

HOME!
MY JOY STANDING ON LATVERIAN SOIL IS QUALIFIED BY THE STILLNESS IN THE AIR.
DID MY JOURNEY TO THE PAST ACCOMPLISH THAT WHICH I INTENDED?
DID I PROVIDE MY PEOPLE WITH THE MEANS TO SURVIVE THE NECROTOXINS --

OR HAVE I RETURNED TO A COUNTRY OF THE DEAD?
SOMETHING MOVES IN THE RUBBLE BEHIND ME.
WHAT ARE THESE STRANGE CREATURES?
I PRIME THE ENERGY CHARGE IN MY GAUNTLET.
BLAM
KRONK
DON'T HURT THEM, DOOM. THEY CAN'T HELP THEMSELVES.

FORTUNE.
YOU'VE [redacted] GONE A LONG TIME, BUT I KNEW YOU'D BE BACK.
THE TIME, THE DATE, THE HOUR. THEY WERE ALL IN THE CARDS.
I DON'T LIKE LOOKING AT THE TAROT VERY MUCH ANYMORE.
THE CARDS POINT TO AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE.
BUT YOU DON'T [redacted] TO BE A PRESCIENT GYPSY TO FIGURE THAT OUT.
ALL YOU NEED TO [redacted] IS WALK THE WAR-RAVAGED STREETS OF GOJRADIA AND SEE THE BODIES --
-- OR WHAT'S LEFT OF THE BODIES.
THE NECROTOXINS -- HOW MANY SURVIVED THEM?

KLANG
NOT ENOUGH, YOU SELF-SERVING CREEP!
YOU DARE STRIKE DOOM?
I'VE KILLED MEN FOR LESS.
ZEFIRO DOES NOT KILL ZEFIRO.
AND YOU ARE ZEFIRO, DOOM. YOU KNOW OUR LAW.
TAKE THE LIFE OF ANOTHER GYPSY, AND YOU WILL BE EXILED FROM OUR TRIBE.
WHO?
SURELY YOU REMEMBER KAZMIERZ ROSIKON, DOOM.
WE SHARED COMMUNION WITH THE ALIEN Y'LOSTIA ON THE CHIN SAN SPACE PLATFORM. *
Ah, YES, FORTUNE'S MAD BROTHER.
YOUR SISTER CROSSED A DANGEROUS LINE A MOMENT AGO --
-- JUST AS SHE DID WHEN SHE MADE A DEAL WITH THE NEON ANGEL TO CURE YOUR INSANITY. *
* 2099 #18.
DOOM 2099 #24.

I DID WHAT I HAD TO DO FOR THE SAKE OF MY FAMILY --
-- AND [redacted] WOULD DO THAT FOR ANY OF THE ZEFIRO --
-- UNLIKE YOU.
DO YOU DOUBT MY COMMITMENT TO MY PEOPLE?
DID I NOT FREE LATVERIA FROM TIGER WYLDE'S OPPRESSIVE RULE?
HALF THE COUNTRY IS DEAD, AND THE OTHER HALF IS IN MOURNING...
THIS CARNAGE IS YOUR FAULT.
IF YOU HADN'T ABANDONED LATVERIA FOR THE UNITED STATES --
-- WE WOULDN'T HAVE PAID THE PRICE FOR YOUR HUBRIS.
I HAVE [redacted] ALL I COULD TO LESSEN THE DAMAGE WROUGHT BY HEROD'S FORBIDDEN TECHNOLOGY.
YOU ARE ALIVE TODAY BECAUSE I TRAVELLED INTO THE PAST TO [redacted] LATVERIA A GENETIC IMMUNITY TO THE NECROTOXINS.

A BITTERSWEET GIFT FOR THE SURVIVORS WHO HAD TO WATCH FRIENDS AND FAMILY DIE --
-- AND FOR THOSE IN WHOM THE NECROTOXINS TRIGGERED A STRANGE METAMORPHOSIS.
SOME OF THE MUTALOCOS, LIKE THE ONES YOU ENCOUNTERED, WERE DRIVEN MAD BY THE TRANSFORMATION.
OTHERS LIKE BALSAC AND PIOTR, EXPERIENCED ONLY TEMPORARY INSANITY.
I KNOW TOO WELL THE DESPAIR OF MADNESS.
Hmmm, A PHYSIOLOGICAL MUTATION BROUGHT ABOUT BY IMMUNILOGICAL RESPONSE.
THIS WARRANTS FURTHER STUDY.
YOU CAN LOCK YOURSELF IN YOUR LABORATORY FOR ALL I CARE --
-- BUT THE ZEFIRO ARE THROUGH BEING PAWNS IN YOUR GLOBAL GAME-PLAYING, DOOM.
WE HAVE REAL WORK TO DO...
...LIKE MOVING PEOPLE TO HIGHER GROUND BEFORE THESE RAINS FLOOD THE VALLEY.
GO IF YOU'RE NOT GOING TO HELP, JUST STAY OUT OF OUR WAY.
FORTUNE AND THE ZEFIRO WILL EVENTUALLY REALIZE THAT ALL THAT I DID WAS FOR THE GREATER GOOD OF LATVERIA.

I HAVE MORE IMMEDIATE MATTERS DEMANDING MY ATTENTION.
I FIND I HAVE RETURNED TO AN EVEN MORE CHAOTIC PRESENT THAN THE ONE I LEFT.
THE ALIEN PLANETOID'S PROXIMITY TO EARTH IS WREAKING ENVIRONMENTAL HAVOC UPON THE PLANET.
AS OCEAN LEVELS RISE AT ALARMING RATES, ATLANTEANS LED BY NAMOR'S OLD FOE ATTUMA HAVE ATTACKED THE ATLANTIC SEABORD.
AND IN THE MARIANAS TRENCH MY UNDERSEA PROBES HAVE DISCOVERED A BEACON OF EXTRATERRESTRIAL ORIGIN.
WHAT CONCERNS ME NOW IS THAT NONE OF THESE EVENTS SEEMED LIKELY BEFORE I TRAVELLED BACK IN TIME.
COULD MY ENCOUNTER WITH MY PAST SELF HAVE TRIGGERED THESE CRISES?
ARE THESE THE INEVITABLE REPERCUSSIONS OF MANIPULATING THE PAST?
WARNING AN UNIDENTIFIED VEHICLE HAS ENTERED CASTLE AIRSPACE.

DEFENSE SENSORS INDICATE THAT THE CRAFT CARRIES MINIMAL ARMAMENT AND POSES NO THREAT.
WHEN ASKED FOR IDENTIFICATION, THE PILOT GIVES A NAME THAT BRINGS BACK A FLOOD OF MEMORY.
IT IS PERHAPS A PLOY TO PIQUE MY CURIOUSITY --
-- BUT I ADMIT THAT IT HAS SUCCEEDED.
MISTER, I SURE HOPE YOU'RE THE GENUINE ARTICLE...
INTERESTING.

...BECAUSE IF YOU'RE NOT THE REAL VICTOR VON DOOM, THEN YOU CAN'T HELP ME --
-- AND EARTH IS DOOMED.
Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth.
-- Milton, 1637
TO BE CONTINUED IN FANTASTIC FOUR 2099 #7!